

**Second Annual
Quality Improvement Committee Summit**
November 28, 2007

Notes

Welcome

Duane Betournay, DCFS Director

This is the Second Annual Quality Improvement Committee (QIC) Summit, which is a wonderful achievement. Our federal partners, Kevin and Marilyn, are joining us today. There are nine QICs in Utah, which are all functioning well. This meeting is combining two processes – the federal planning process and the QIC Summit. We hope that the QICs joining in the planning process will work well.

Keynote

Rick Smith, Chair of the State QIC

The QICs are critical to the child welfare system. It is easy to get off track, so we need to re-look at Milestone 9 of the Performance Milestone Plan and focus on the purpose of the QICs. Two outcomes are required in Milestone 9: Study data and outcomes, and suggest changes. The activities of the QICs are to review trend data (there is a huge amount of data that is available); discuss what communities could do for improvement (this includes the entire community); deal with media and public relation issues; deal with specific problems on cases or other region/office areas; and work on qualitative reviews and special studies.

The Exit Agreement provides measurements for ending the David C. lawsuit. In the Exit Agreement, it states that DCFS shall provide adequate staffing to the QICs; assist with data interpretation; provide detailed practice information; support QICs' ability to make recommendations for systemic improvement (written recommendations will receive a written response); support QIC website (<http://utahqic.utah.gov>); and have annual QIC summits.

With all of this in mind, our first role is to be educated critics. The State QIC has made written recommendations, received written responses, and has actually seen changes. Our second role is to be advocates for the child welfare system in Utah. We really can make a difference in a very tangible way. Our challenge is to go back to our QICs and fulfill these duties.

Panel of QIC Chairpersons

Chantel Markel, St. George QIC
Dan Grinder, Western QIC

Chris Chytraus, Salt Lake Valley QIC
Brenda Durtschi, Northern QIC

- *Dan talked about how the Western QIC has been recruiting community members to join their QIC, and has been working to enlist more foster care homes in the area. Dan also spoke of the need to recruit members from outside the child welfare community who can contribute “out of the box” thinking and can help enlist support from a wider community base.*

- *Brenda explained that the Northern QIC is studying the increased number of children in foster care and the need to recruit more foster homes; and is continuing the “Stories of Hope” program. The Northern QIC held an immersion, which was extremely successful; also the committee is supporting DCFS’ transitional housing dorm, which has been the subject of some community concern.*
- *Chantel talked about how the St. George QIC has created subcommittees to work on separate issues, such as the need for shelter homes, “kin for kids” program development, and a success night to recognize DCFS staff. They have a large group on paper, but not a lot of people attend the meeting. They need more clarification from DCFS about the role of the committees and how financing can be utilized.*
- *Chris stated that the Salt Lake Valley QIC has been evolving for the last couple of years. One of the struggles has been to retain members. Their committee has implemented the “heart of gold” award; they have been working on employee retention and turnover; and they held an immersion that was well attended and very successful. Their committee needs to develop more community partnerships and increase positive press. When committee members ask questions, sometimes it feels like DCFS is defending themselves instead of openly dealing with the issues. There is so much data to review, so they have narrowed it down to one item a month and have presented members with clear and concise data for review.*

Discussion: What is working well? What could be improved? What needs do you have?

Duane Betournay, DCFS

Mary Ogan, State QIC

Comments and discussion from the group included:

- *How QICs can be more involved and useful in the legislative process.*
- *QICs have many resources from which to educate themselves about child welfare issues (for example, requesting information from the Utah Foster Care Foundation to help focus QIC recommendations to improve foster care recruitment and retention). QICs have the ability to examine the entire process to help understand what families must go through in order to become licensed foster care families.*
- *In-Home Services can prevent removal of children and help with the rising numbers of children in care. The QICs can help improve In-Home Services by suggesting other ways to improve prevention so that fewer children are removed.*
- *There is a disconnect between the State QICs and the Regional QICs to help understand what each committee should be working on. There was discussion of various ways to help communication, such as blogging or having chairs attend more meetings, etc.*
- *Community partners believe that the citizen involvement has really improved the child welfare system.*
- *There was discussion of the QICs’ ability to advocate for community-wide support for the difficult work and the trauma that caseworkers and other community partners experience.*
- *IHC is dealing with a serious problem in retaining nurses, and maybe the QICs can help address this issue as we need to do a better job as a system in supporting each other.*
- *It is important for committee members to understand the system so they can make appropriate suggestions for system improvement.*

- *DCFS employees must be careful how they approach legislators. Branching out the QICs to the community at large can be an effective way of dealing with legislative issues. Chantel suggested inviting legislators' wives and/or husbands to become members of the committees as a potential way to reach legislators.*
- *Let's get into the community and recruit new members!*
- *Support from DCFS is valuable and essential.*

Community Immersions, Education, Media

Liz Sollis, DHS Public Relations

Most of the problems expressed today come back to a need for better communication. Committee members identified their reasons for being part of a QIC, including:

- *To be advocates for children.*
- *To bring the community into child welfare issues and get community ownership of them.*
- *Because they are invested in DCFS and care about outcomes for children.*
- *Because they want to know what best practice is for DCFS.*
- *To be part of solutions to help children.*
- *Because they care about outcomes for children.*
- *To promote a better sense of community with an eye on quality improvement.*
- *To better understand and help the community understand DCFS.*
- *Because it is important for community members to get together and help DCFS come up with solutions.*
- *To provide community involvement to help prevent child abuse.*

This helps us understand why other people should become involved with the QICs. We may want to take this message to the community by creating a brochure with these points.

Fact sheets about DHS, a draft QIC brochure, and an immersion agenda were provided for the group to review. It is important that we are consistent in the data we receive and utilize.

We want to look at the QIC website and enhance what is currently there, including maybe an on-line registration, a place for feedback, and a blog. This will help with community outreach. Think about why people would want to be involved with a QIC. We need to "show, tell, and yell." Immersions are a great way to involve the public. Media involvement is important. QICs should look at the goals of DHS and DCFS to understand what the goals of the QICs can be.

The meth initiative in Utah is raising awareness about meth abuse in Utah. The two campaign slogans are getting feedback, so they are working. Similar methods could help QICs get support from the community.

Lunch: 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Introduction to Child and Family Services

What is it and what is the community role?

Linda Wininger, DCFS

The Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) is a federal review that is similar to the Qualitative Case Reviews. The CFSR looks at both Out-of-Home Care and In-Home Services cases, and is quite intense where you devote one day to a specific case. The CFSR looks at outcomes and systemic factors with a statewide assessment and on-site review. Child and Family Status includes safety, permanency, and well-being. Systemic Factors includes statewide information system, case review system, quality assurance system, staff and provider training, service array and resource development, agency responsiveness to the community, and foster and adoptive parent licensing, recruitment, and retention. If the state is not in substantial conformity, there is a Program Improvement Plan (PIP). Every state needed a PIP during the last CFSR.

The CFSR process has five steps:

- *Data profile.*
- *Statewide assessment.*
- *On-site review.*
- *Determination of substantial conformity.*
- *PIP.*

Our next CFSR is scheduled for early summer of 2009. It will include 65 cases in three different counties, including Salt Lake Valley Region. Our data profile started in October 2007. This time the statewide assessment will consist of what has occurred since the last statewide assessment, which will include information about the accomplishments of the QICs. This is where the QICs fit in well. QIC members can also help with the on-site review, as we need to have half of the required reviewers from Utah.

A successful statewide assessment requires stakeholder involvement. Collaboration takes planning, time, and a commitment to working together to create change. We can utilize this information to improve our QICs.

Next steps on how we can use QICs for the CFSR:

- *Linda and her team can help each QIC understand how they can be involved in the CFSR by attending their meetings.*
- *Have different QICs focus on different issues.*
- *Salt Lake Valley QIC members can participate in the on-site reviews in different areas of the state.*
- *Linda will give QICs a timeline and what is needed for a plan for involving the QICs in the assessment process. This is a big project that will be accomplished over the next calendar year.*
- *Utilize the National Resources Centers and receive their presentation on the CFSR.*
- *Use the tools available from the federal government.*

The QICs are already doing what is required - we just need to capture it on paper. There are three groups required to be involved in the statewide assessment: the courts, tribal representatives, and youth who have been involved with the child welfare system in Utah.

Priority Focus Areas

Cosette Mills, DCFS

What can I do with this information?

DCFS spent an entire day assessing what to focus on for improvement. The number one priority focus area was employee recruitment and retention. Others were substance abuse and placement stability. These three areas are part of the Exit Agreement in the David C. lawsuit. For more detailed information, QIC members should reference the priority focus area plans on the web at <http://www.hsdcs.state.ut.us/QuarterlyReport.htm>.

Employee Retention and Morale

Cosette Mills, DCFS

Employee turnover has a negative impact on employee satisfaction. Three primary goals are:

- *Workers stay employed with DCFS (learn from exit surveys; propose employee pay plan/career ladder; enhance worker non-salary supports; and improve recruitment and prescreening methods).*
- *Minimize negative impact from employee turnover and absence (identify current staffing practices/realities; explore how to minimize negative impact; and local pilot testing).*
- *Employee satisfaction (increase involvement in decision-making; formalize communication strategies; identify resources/procedures for incentives; and assess scope of work and seek to streamline/reduce).*

Approaches include getting information directly from the regions and research/information from outside DCFS. The QICs can look at this priority focus area with a critical eye, starting with:

- *Review worker exit surveys.*
- *Propose pay plan/career ladder.*
- *Communication and worker involvement in organizational policy and decision-making.*

Partnering with QICs can include:

- *Continue worker recognitions.*
- *Gather and analyze information about retention, satisfaction, and turnover impact.*
- *New ideas, an outside view, and recommendations for employee retention, recruitment, and satisfaction.*
- *Support DCFS efforts to seek additional funds for worker salaries.*

Suggestions:

- *Sharing this information with the QICs will be helpful to know how the committees can help.*
- *Keep the QIC chairs updated and have ongoing communication with them.*

Placement Stability

Tanya Albornoz, DCFS

This is one of the elements that we did not pass during the last CFSR, and DCFS continues to struggle with this. The goal is that every child in care has two or fewer placements. Every single placement change that a child goes through when in DCFS care can be detrimental to the child and is counted in the CFSR. Key areas that affect our placement stability outcomes and where the QICs can help:

- *Shelter care.*
- *Kinship care.*
- *Adoption disruptions.*
- *Support education and recruitment of foster families.*
- *Educate workers on the trauma children experience with placement changes.*
- *Culturally diversified placement families.*
- *Better matching of children with potential placements, and identifying why foster parents request certain child characteristics.*
- *Behavioral issues with children.*

QICs can help by:

- *Examining each region's placement stability plan and re-entry plan. Contact region directors or program improvement coordinators and obtain a copy of these plans.*
- *Assessing current policies and resources for foster family support and suggesting improvements.*
- *Assessing and making recommendations to modify respite guidelines.*
- *Making recommendations for the DHS/DCFS funding plan for increased supports and pay for foster families.*
- *Making recommendations regarding increasing effective recruitment, training, and licensing procedures for foster families.*
- *Making recommendations to improve In-Home Services to prevent children from coming into care.*
- *Looking at available research and what is effective in other states, and making recommendations from that information about what might be effective in Utah.*

Tanya would love to attend the QIC meetings and be a resource. The Foster Care Foundation is also available as a resource.

Comments and discussion:

- *It is difficult to make an assessment about the best placement for a child in a short amount of time. This creates a need for shelter care. Shelters should not be used as a long-term placement. Other states have been successful without using shelter care.*
- *The CFSR includes only two placements over the time a child is in DCFS care. States run into problems when shelter care is the first placement choice. The CFSR looks at the individual cases to determine if a placement change was appropriate for the child and will make adjustments accordingly.*

- *We need to look at the motivation of foster families to see if they are serving the needs of the children in care. We should look at other states that have been successful. We are moving toward using a safe homestudy model, which should help us in this area.*
- *DCFS is currently examining shelter care policies. One possible solution may be that the use of shelter care is phased out, especially for children 0 to 3 years of age. The Congregate Care Workgroup is examining all of these issues and will make recommendations to DCFS.*
- *Professional parents should receive compensation for their expertise.*

Substance Abuse

Karen Buchi, State QIC

Discussion: What is happening across the state and what are our future efforts and goals for drug endangered children?

The percentage of foster care cases with alcohol or drugs as a contributing factor remains about 50%. Meth abuse has continually risen in Utah. Parental substance abuse really affects a child and their outcomes for life. Positive impacts include the temperament of the child and access to a reliable adult figure. We need to have representatives from the schools as part of our QICs. Substance abuse treatment does work and it is the only way to stop the cycle. Parents need an easy way to access substance abuse treatment. We need to take a close look at how we partner with mental health, schools, and other community members on this priority focus area.

The governor established the Utah Methamphetamine Joint Task Force to look at the issue of substance abuse. Over the year past year, this task force has been looking at all substance abuse issues and has formed several subcommittees.

The Drug-Exposed Infants and Mothers Subcommittee will develop a statewide policy that will improve the lives of mothers with substance abuse problems and their children. Uniformity across the state on how CPS deals with referrals for drug abuse is also one of their goals. They will also respond to some of the legislation that is more punitive than helpful to mothers with substance abuse problems.

The Utah Drug Endangered Child (DEC) Alliance Medical Advisory Team has been working on this issue for several years. Their web address is www.utahdecalliance.org/UTmedical.htm. A brochure was presented to all members for review.

Activities of the QICs on substance abuse issues:

- *Cedar City is establishing a DEC initiative.*
- *Western Region is applying for the Robert Wood Johnson grant.*
- *St. George co-hosted the Methamphetamine Conference in May 2007.*
- *The State QIC is looking at the uniformity of response, focus on treatment, and consistent education for all professionals.*

Wrap-up

Duane Betournay, DCFS Director

A lot of information was shared today. DCFS staff will encapsulate two or three areas of how the QICs can help us with the priority focus areas and give that list to the QICs. If you have any questions, thoughts, or ideas, send an email to Duane, Katy, or your QIC representative.